



The Transportation Policy Body for the North Central Texas Council of Governments  
(Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Dallas-Fort Worth Region)

June 10, 2025

Mr. Noah Heath  
TxDOT – PTN  
TA Program Manager

Dear Mr. Heath:

The Regional Transportation Council is pleased to support the 2025 Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Transportation Alternatives (TA) application submitted by Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) for the Cotton Belt/Silver Line Rail Trail Phase 3a (the Trail).

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) has facilitated planning and included the Trail in the **Metropolitan Transportation Plan** for nearly 30 years (since 1996) as a Regional Veloweb alignment intended to serve as the regional expressway-class trail for active transportation. The entire 26-mile corridor from Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) International Airport to the City of Plano extends through seven cities (Grapevine, Coppell, Carrollton, Addison, Dallas, Richardson, and Plano) and three counties (Tarrant, Dallas, and Collin). The Cotton Belt Trail is also designated as a “Cross-State Spine” by TxDOT’s **Bicycle Tourism and Trails Study**.

Since 2016, DART has coordinated the integration of the Trail with the Silver Line rail construction plans. To this end, DART initiated engagement and conversations with diverse residents and community-based organizations to ensure equity considerations for underserved and transit-dependent populations have access to the Trail and DART Silver Line rail stations. DART has conducted over 150 public/stakeholder meetings discussing how the Trail will be coordinated with the planning, design, and construction of the Silver Line. The Trail was also identified in the 2018 Cotton Belt Regional Rail Corridor Environmental Impact Statement process and received overwhelming public support for its inclusion in the Silver Line construction. On June 30, 2021, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) determined the Trail met the criteria for a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Categorical Exclusion (CE) in accordance with FTA’s regulations implementing NEPA. This was reaffirmed on August 12, 2024, when FTA determined that modifications proposed to the Cotton Belt Trail would not result in any substantial impact to the quality of the human environment, and the previously approved NEPA CE determination of June 30, 2021, remains in effect.

Since 2018, the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) Regional Transportation Council, Dallas County, and the seven cities affected by the construction of the Silver Line have awarded DART more than \$100 million in federal and local funding toward the Trail Project engineering design and construction phases along the entire 26-mile Silver Line Corridor. This funding is programmed in NCTCOG’s Transportation Improvement Program.

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Since 2020, DART has worked closely with NCTCOG and respective cities along the Silver Line Corridor to complete the engineering design and construction of the Trail within the DART-owned rail right-of-way.

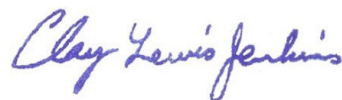
DART has completed engineering design and is coordinating construction of the Trail through the FTA and will enter into necessary agreements with FTA to construct the Trail with funding awarded for the project. Upon approval of funding by the Texas Transportation Commission, NCTCOG will immediately coordinate programming the funding into the Transportation Improvement Program. NCTCOG will also coordinate with TxDOT for the transfer of funding from Federal Highway Administration to FTA for DART to access the funds for construction.

This project requesting TxDOT Transportation Alternatives Program funding includes approximately 4.4 miles of shared use paths, key trail bridges and boardwalks through portions of Addison, Carrollton, Coppell, and Dallas. It will improve safe walking and bicycling access to three DART Silver Line Light Rail stations currently under construction. Construction plans were designed to federal standards by DART's Silver Line Rail contractor and Issued for Construction documents for the entire trail corridor from DFW Airport to Plano were completed in 2023. Thus, this Trail project is "shovel ready" and can move forward quickly toward construction.

Again, the Regional Transportation Council fully supports the 2025 TxDOT TA application submitted by Dallas Area Rapid Transit and would ask you to select this important project. This is a truly a regional "rail with trail" alignment that crosses numerous city/town and county boundaries, which is very difficult to accomplish and impossible to achieve without a multi-agency partnership as a model project for the State of Texas and the country.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this project.

Sincerely,



Clay Lewis Jenkins, Chair  
Regional Transportation Council  
County Judge, Dallas County

KW:bw

cc: Michael Morris, PE, Director of Transportation, NCTCOG